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Title: Sample Focus Group Questions for Girls in STEM

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## Sample Focus Group Questions for **Girls in STEM**

### How to use These Sample Focus Group Questions

These are sample questions for focus groups to be conducted as part of qualitative data collection for Year 2- Year 6 of **Girls in STEM**. You may use any of the questions from the list during the two sessions during the school year, as long as those questions are not repeated in both Baseline and follow-up sessions. Please follow the facilitator script provided.

### Introduction by the Facilitator

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for taking the time to participate in a focus group on attitudes towards STEM. This focus group is part of a larger study that Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is conducting to learn about the STEM needs in your community and how best to tailor programming to girls. Usually, STEM is presented to students without consideration of gender, and we want to understand how we might customize STEM to be more interesting to girls.

You are a group of girls from the community that traditionally supplies LANL with many of its employees. We would like to hear from you about how school classes and mentor services would best be able to meet your needs for pursuing STEM coursework at college, and for selecting LANL as a possible place to work.

During this focus group I will ask questions and facilitate a conversation about how LANL- **Girls in STEM** might be able to help you have positive attitudes towards STEM through mentoring by LANL scientists. Please keep in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any of the questions I will ask. The purpose is to stimulate conversation and hear the opinions of everyone in the room. I hope you will feel comfortable speaking honestly and sharing your ideas with us.

Please note that this session will be recorded to ensure that we adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. However, the comments from the focus group will remain confidential and your name will not be attached to any comment you make. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Focus Group Questions

1. Let's do a quick round of introductions. Can each of you tell the group your name and whether you are a big fan of STEM, or if STEM subject are not your favorite study topics.
2. Imagine that you are part of a committee of people designing STEM coursework for seventh graders. These are courses that people like you might take to improve girls' attitudes towards STEM.
  - a. What are the factors that you will make sure your committee considers in designing these courses? What are the things that you are sure would attract girls like you to the courses?
  - b. (PROBE) Remember, these can be in many areas: the curriculum (or classes you take), the length of the class, the time of day its offered, the teaching style, the course materials, whether the course offers intergenerational interaction, and anything else you can think of.
  - c. What type of STEM course do you think (grade 7) girls are most interested in: those that lead to improved skills in STEM, or those that increase interest in STEM? What are the upsides and downsides of each type of course?
3. Now, imagine you are part of a committee of people designing STEM career services for seventh grade girls.
  - a. What are the factors that you will make sure your committee considers in designing these services? What are the things that you are sure would attract seventh grade girls who need information on STEM careers to these services?
  - b. (PROBE) Remember, these can be in many areas: the materials provided, the types of career services offered, the skills or approach of the mentors in working with (grade 7) girls, or anything else you can thin of.
4. What are some of the obstacles or reasons why you might be hesitant to take STEM courses in (grade 7) and beyond?
5. What are some of the things LANL **Girls in STEM** could do to help alleviate these obstacles and make you feel comfortable taking those classes?
  - a. (PROBE) This can be a wide range of services- new student orientation, advising, transportation services, assistance with accessing funds for technology hardware, software, and wifi, or anything else you can think of
6. Is there anything else we haven't discussed yet that you think is important for LANL **Girls in STEM** to know about to consider tailoring STEM programs to (grade 7) girls?

## How to use These Sample Focus Group Questions

These are sample questions for interviews to be conducted as part of qualitative data collection for Year 2- Year 6 of **Girls in STEM**. You may use any of the questions from the list during the session during the summer session, as long as those questions are not repeated in both Baseline and follow-up sessions. Please follow the facilitator script provided.

### Introduction by the Facilitator

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for taking the time to participate in a n interview on attitudes towards STEM. This interview is part of a larger study that Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) is conducting to learn about the STEM needs in your community and how best to tailor programming to girls. Usually, STEM is presented to students without consideration of gender, and we want to understand how we might customize STEM to be more interesting to girls.

You are a group of girls from the community that traditionally supplies LANL with many of its employees. We would like to hear from you about how school classes and mentor services would best be able to meet your needs for pursuing STEM coursework at college, and for selecting LANL as a possible place to work.

During this interview I will ask questions and facilitate a conversation about how LANL- **Girls in STEM** might be able to help you have positive attitudes towards STEM through mentoring by LANL scientists. Please keep in mind that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers to any of the questions I will ask. The purpose is to stimulate conversation and hear the opinions of everyone in the room. I hope you will feel comfortable speaking honestly and sharing your ideas with me.

Please note that this session will be recorded to ensure that we adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. However, the comments from the focus group will remain confidential and your name will not be attached to any comment you make. Do you have any questions before we begin?

### Interview Questions

1. Do you find it easy to do coursework for STEM subjects?
2. Do you find it interesting to do coursework for STEM subjects?
3. What do most (grade 7) girls think about STEM classes?

Note to facilitator: Apply the following for probe, structure, etc:

Structure	I would like to move on to a different topic
Follow-up	Could you say something more about.....
Probe	Repeat back what has been said and add a direct question
Specify	What do you do then?
Interpret	Do you mean that XXXXX
	Is it fair to say that XXXXXXXXXX

## Behavioral Observation Guidelines

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

Observer Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer all questions. Beside each item below, indicate the degree of participation by a check mark.

	Observed Behavior	Not at all (0)	Just a little (1)	Pretty Much (2)	Very Much (3)
1	Pouts when STEM activities announced				
2	Smiles when STEM activities announced				
3	Prepares readily for STEM activity				
4	Delays preparing for STEM activity				
5	Student seems distressed when STEM activities announced				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
6	Student participates reluctantly during STEM instruction				
7	Student participates enthusiastically during STEM instruction				
8	Student contributes reluctantly to STEM instruction				
9	Student contributes willingly to STEM instruction				
10	Student refuses to participate in STEM instruction				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				

	Observed Behavior	Not at all (0)	Just a little (1)	Pretty Much (2)	Very Much (3)
11	Student participates reluctantly during STEM guided practice				
12	Student participates enthusiastically during STEM guided practice				
13	Student contributes reluctantly to STEM guided practice				
14	Student contributes willingly to STEM guided practice				
15	Student refuses to participate in STEM guided practice				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
16	Student participates reluctantly during STEM independent practice				
17	Student participates enthusiastically during STEM independent practice				
18	Student contributes reluctantly to STEM independent practice				
19	Student contributes willingly to STEM independent practice				
20	Student refuses to participate in STEM independent practice				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				

	<b>Observed Behavior</b>	<b>Not at all (0)</b>	<b>Just a little (1)</b>	<b>Pretty Much (2)</b>	<b>Very Much (3)</b>
<b>21</b>	Student participates reluctantly during STEM follow-up discussion				
<b>22</b>	Student participates enthusiastically during STEM follow-up discussion				
<b>23</b>	Student contributes reluctantly to STEM follow-up discussion				
<b>24</b>	Student contributes willingly follow-up discussion				
<b>25</b>	Student refuses to participate in STEM follow-up discussion				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>				
	<b>OVERALL MEAN INTEREST SCORE</b>				
	<b>OVERALL MEAN INTEREST SCORE</b>				